

# **COLUMBIA RIVER REGIONAL FORUM**

## **TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM**

November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2001

### **FACILITATOR'S NOTES ON FUTURE ACTIONS**

Facilitator: Donna Silverberg

The following notes are a summary of issues that are intended to point out future actions or issues that may need further discussion at upcoming meetings. These notes are not intended to be the "record" of the meeting, only a reminder for TMT members.

#### **Year-end Review, 2001 Water Supply Forecast:**

Harold Opitz of the National Weather Service showed graphs of the very low water year west of the continental divide for 2001. The Weather Service is working to improve forecast tools to reduce the standard of error, although their forecasts this year proved to be quite good. Harold said there is still much uncertainty in the precipitation forecasts for 2002. Right now it looks like there is an equal chance of 2002 being a dry, normal or above normal year! TMT expressed their interest in revisiting this in a few months when there is more data to provide a better degree of certainty. Harold agreed to return when this data exists.

#### **Chum Studies/Operations:**

Cathy Hlebechuk presented the COE's model runs for proposed chum operations. She will distribute them to TMT members via email. The Action Agencies feel, as they did last week, that the constraints of the Vernita Bar agreement remain the main hurdle to meeting the requested 125 kcfs below BON before November 19<sup>th</sup>. The Action Agencies were asked under what conditions could last week's chum SOR be implemented? They responded that a sudden increase in Snake River flows and/or meeting Vernita Bar criteria could enable implementation of the SOR for chum below BON. They expressed doubt that either of these conditions would present themselves prior to Nov. 19<sup>th</sup>.

Grant PUD updated TMT on the status of conditions at Vernita Bar. Significant spawning has occurred in the mainstem and 5 redds have been found below 40kcfs. In their opinion, keeping a 55 kcfs flow during the day would allow shaping of 85-90 kcfs daily average flow and be the best operation for VB fish.

Kyle Martin expressed CRITFC's desire to avoid pitting chum against other species. WFWD's Shane Scott reported that his agency had seen very few chum in the Ives Island area. Those that were seen appeared to be quite "green" and not yet ready for spawning. He asked if anyone knew what time the chum go up the nearby creeks. This led to a suggestion that maybe a pulse could be provided to help fish while awaiting an increase in flows for a steady 125 –130 kcfs.

The Action Agencies asked Oregon's Ron Boyce if any progress had been made related to establishing criteria that could assist in a decision to de-water chum redds if conditions get bad again this year. Ron expressed interest in having discussions with other members of the Regional Forum to jointly determine criteria regarding this issue.

**Action:** TMT agreed to raise the chum redds de-watering issue at the December IT meeting, asking IT to direct the development of criteria for de-watering redds. Specifically, TMT members want to know if and how big a role they should play in developing criteria that would be used if conditions were to deteriorate and a determination of de-watering existing redds were necessary. IT should be involved because such a determination is both technical and policy related.

**Action:** Chum discussions will continue at the next TMT meeting/call, Friday November 16<sup>th</sup> at 1 p.m., to decide which operation to implement on November 19<sup>th</sup>. The group will review current status of the fish and water levels.

### **Lessons Learned from WY 2001:**

TMT members were asked to reflect on the year-end review presentations and discuss "lessons learned" from the past water year. The following list summarizes their thoughts as expressed in a brainstorming session:

- Operating Bonneville to a tailwater level proved more important than operating to a specific kcfs for chum last fall;
- There is a need to establish drought criteria and triggers. For example, if "wet" months are dry, then there needs to be a change in operations at that time, not when it is too late to have any effect on the overall system;
- Criteria for de-watering redds need to be established to help make tough decisions in the future;
- There are more factors to consider regarding chum near Hamilton Creek such as tides, location of fish in the surrounding springs, etc. More information about this habitat area could help in-season decision making;
- There is a need to establish a better working relationship with Idaho Power Company to coordinate in-season needs;
- Low flows were harder on in-river steelhead than anticipated;
- A lack of clarity regarding the power emergency (criteria used to establish it, calling it, process for decision-making, etc.) had negative effects on operations, especially spill. It also had a stressful effect on relationships;
- Understanding effects of temperature on survival has become either more precise or lucky—Billy Connor's work was very useful to TMT;
- Tools for predicting adult returns need sharpening;
- A precise understanding of redd elevations below Bonneville and at Hanford Reach would be useful (**ACTION:** Scott Bettin will check with Batell to obtain data regarding redd locations and share with TMT members at their upcoming field trip);
- Better use of weather and climate information can enhance the TMT process (**ACTION:** Kyle Martin will begin giving a regular report on weather and climate conditions);

- A higher level of involvement by the executives this year lead to confusion – this could have been managed differently, and should be clarified if such an event were to occur in the future;
- Energy conservation can have a profound effect on load reduction.

**ACTION:** Donna Silverberg asked the group to consider the ‘TMT process’ as they continue to reflect on the lessons learned in the 2001 season. She will add a discussion on this to the agenda of a future meeting.

**Review Current System Conditions:**

**Operations:** Cathy Hlebechuk and Ted David (filling in for Tony Norris) reported on the current system and operations (see website for details). The balloon tag test is underway at Lower Granite and zero flow is scheduled at John Day and The Dalles on December 9<sup>th</sup> for three hours to look for leakage problems. TMT members will be updated on the testing at the December TMT meeting.

**Action:** As requested, TMT members will receive (via email) specific operations at John Day and The Dalles that require zero flow.

**Power System Status:** BPA is running to meet loads. Scott Bettin said everything looks normal at this time.

**Emergency Protocols:**

It was clarified that the latest E.P. draft is dated October 24<sup>th</sup>. Ron Boyce reported that Oregon’s attorney Steve Sanders would like to talk to Gail Lear (COE) and Bill Kinsey (BPA) before finalizing the protocols.

**Next Meeting, November 16<sup>th</sup>, 1 pm (\*note new date and time):**

Agenda items:

- Chum operations for November 19<sup>th</sup>
- Emergency Protocol check-in
- Vernita Bar update

**\*\*There will be no TMT meeting November 21<sup>st</sup>. TMT will gather for a field trip to look at the chum spawning areas around Ive’s Island on November 28<sup>th</sup>. Information (time, place, maps, etc.) will be provided via email and/or at the November 16<sup>th</sup> meeting.**